



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Spanish (1SP0)

Paper 2F: Speaking in Spanish

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Summer 2022

Publications Code 1SP0_2F_2206_ER

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This was the first Unit 2 GCSE examination for 3 years after the lockdown caused by the pandemic and it was very gratifying to see how candidates and their teachers responded so well as though there had been no interruption. Congratulations to all who took part, prepared well and approached the examination with a clear understanding of what was expected of them.

However, in some cases careless mistakes were made, perhaps the most serious of which was that of offering the candidates the wrong cards – for instance Foundation when they had been entered for Higher – and this disadvantaged the candidates significantly as no marks could be awarded for the Role Play nor for Communication and Content on the Picture card. Some candidates seem to have been entered at the wrong level with high achieving candidates who could have coped well at Higher Level being examined for Foundation and others struggling with the Higher-Level exam who could have performed better at Foundation.

TASK 1: THE ROLE PLAY

The role play is marked for Communication only, unlike the Picture based Task and the Conversation. Short, relevant answers were all that were necessary to access the full marks. A number of candidates gave long and developed responses, and at times the teachers encouraged this by treating the role play as an extended conversation. Such practice is unnecessary, as there are no extra marks for long, developed conversations. Answers should be brief and to the point. Those who tended to keep their responses simple generally performed better than those who extended their answers.

Candidates sometimes lost marks due to use of wrong verbs – using 'fue' instead of 'fui' creates ambiguity, and therefore, loses marks. Occasionally, candidates who ignored the question mark in front of the bullet point and made a statement rather than asking a question, lost marks.

Teachers generally conducted the examinations professionally, although some deprived their candidates of the marks by straying from the scripted questions, paraphrasing, or adding extra information. It is important to understand that any unscripted interjection from the teacher that could give an advantage to the candidate immediately invalidates any response from the candidate. A few teachers failed to read out the introduction as scripted, an omission that could affect the candidate's performance. Equally, when the teacher changes the used form of the verb to tu when asking questions of the candidate, this gives the candidate an unfair advantage and results in the candidate's response being ignored in the marking. Similarly, the occasional omission of one of the bullet point questions clearly throws the candidates as well as losing them marks. A significant number of candidates did not understand what 'datos personales' meant and either thought the question was referring to dates or inviting them to give information about their character instead – for instance, 'Soy muy trabajador'. It is important for candidates to read the instructions on the card they are given.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all modern languages:

- Where a candidate has used the wrong register, this is ignored unless it impedes communication. However, if the teacher strays from the script and changes the register of the question, this gives the candidate an unfair advantage, and the candidate's response is deemed to be invalid.
- If a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.
- Where a candidate has offered an incorrect response to a question, the teacher may not repeat the question. If s/he does so and the candidate then gives a correct response, this is ignored.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not re-phrase any of the questions.

TASK 2: THE PICTURE-BASED TASK

Most candidates did well and had prepared carefully and thoroughly for the Picture based Task questions during the 12-minute period allocated for preparation time. Unlike the Role Play, there were marks available for extended answers in Communication and Content as well as marks for the Knowledge and Accuracy of language. Candidates were expected not only to develop their responses but also to express opinions and justify them and to narrate and describe events. Two of the bullet points required the use of the past and future tenses or time frames.

As with the Role Plays, teachers must keep to the script without changing or paraphrasing any of the questions and without adding any supplementary, unscripted questions. If they do, then again, they will deprive their candidates of marks and any extraneous questions together with the responses are ignored.

For the first question – Describe the picture – the candidates were well rehearsed into uttering useful expressions such as 'hay', 'en la foto puedo ver', 'a la derecha', 'a la izquierda', 'en el fondo' and 'veo' which helped them to develop and extend their responses. The best candidates went methodically through the picture with descriptions of the people, their physical appearance, clothes, colours and paying attention to the background setting. A number of candidates often gave developed answers to the picture description in bullet point 1, but thereafter gave much shorter, undeveloped responses to subsequent questions.

Candidates should be encouraged to describe the picture in more detail; often the description was very short and minimal. It is important to make use of the scripted follow-up questions - '¿Algo más?' or '¿Por qué (no)?' - to encourage candidates to extend their responses and aim for higher marks. Conversely, asking for '¿Algo más?' when a candidate has already given a very full and detailed response is counterproductive. Inevitably there were pronunciation mistakes, for instance, with basic language such as 'hay' and there were over-used phrases such as 'me gusta porque es divertido / interesante' and 'en mi opinión' (frequently with an anglicised rendering of 'opinion').

The most frequently used words were 'divertido', 'interesante', 'aburrido' and 'importante'. A number of candidates found it difficult to differentiate between tenses in answering questions relating to the past or the future.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles agreed across all the modern languages:

- Candidates must make reference to the visual image in response to the first bullet point question.
- Where a teacher changes a question or inserts a supplementary question which is not scripted, there can be no credit for a response made by the candidate.
- Teachers may repeat each question twice but may not rephrase any of the questions.
- If the teacher misses out a question or the question is not answered, the examiner will drop one band in the assessment grid for Communication and Content only.

TASK 3: THE CONVERSATIONS

Candidates were required to participate in two conversations: the first on a topic selected and prepared by them, and the second on an unprepared topic selected by Edexcel Pearson. An equal amount of time should have been allocated to each of the conversations and the total time was 3½ - 4½ minutes at Foundation level. It is essential to keep strictly to the timings and avoid any imbalance between the 2 conversations or any shortfall or excess in timings.

Most teachers kept strictly to the timings, put their candidates at their ease using a friendly tone of voice and spoke clearly and slowly so that the candidates had little or no problems in understanding the questions. However, in some cases the teachers allowed the first conversation to overrun thus restricting the time available for the second conversation. Since examiners stop listening when the full time is up, the shortness of the second conversation affected the final marks awarded.

On one occasion, the teacher invited the candidates to choose which of the two unprepared topics they would prefer, and this is clearly in breach of the rules. For the first Conversation, candidates should be encouraged to introduce the topic they have chosen for up to one minute prior to the interaction with the teacher. It is equally important to ensure that they are not allowed to go on beyond the 1 minute and teachers should interrupt with their first question if the candidate seems determined to continue with a monologue. Unsurprisingly, the first prepared conversation was often more successful than the second, and it was noticeable that some candidates frequently found it difficult to complete their sentences as they struggled to find the right vocabulary, grammatical structures or verb tenses.

Some candidates were encouraged to use heavily rehearsed sentences and phrases in Conversation 1. At times candidates who had been prepared in this manner gave robotic responses which often appeared to show little understanding of the language, for instance '¡Ay, qué horror' delivered in an unenthusiastic monotone. However, the second, unprepared conversation often gave a better guide to the candidates' fluency and ability.

Some teachers are still relying on a list of prepared questions and in some extreme cases all the candidates had been directed to prepare the same topic for their Conversation 1, even to the extent of providing identical introductions for the first minute. Moreover, the teacher read out exactly the same questions to each of the candidates so that the examination became a question-and-answer session instead of a spontaneous conversation. Some teachers had clearly not been listening carefully to what the candidates were saying and confused them by asking questions the answers to which had already been covered in the initial presentation. These are examples of bad practice and against the spirit of the exam. The Conversations should be allowed to develop naturally, and the teachers should listen carefully to what the candidate is saying and build the conversation accordingly. It is certainly worth preparing topic related questions in advance in case the conversation grinds to a halt, but it is not a good idea to rely exclusively on prepared questions as this destroys spontaneity and the natural flow of conversation. Some candidates were disadvantaged because the teacher failed to ask any questions that required the use of a tense other than the present.

Again, it is worth remembering the Marking Principles that have been agreed across all modern languages:

- Foundation Conversations should last for between 3½ and 4½ minutes.
- Timings begin with the candidate's first utterance.
- Conversations that are too short are likely to be self-penalising.
- Conversations that are too long: once the 4½ minutes have passed, examiners stop listening and assessing at the end of the candidate's response to the current question.
- An equal amount of time must be allocated to each Conversation.
- Where the first Conversation is a monologue and has no interaction, candidates will be limited to a maximum score of 6 marks for Interaction and Spontaneity. The marks for Communication and Content and Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy, however, are unaffected.

The most popular choices of Topics for the first Conversation were Holidays, School life and Educational visits, and there was a significant number of prepared conversations on the Environment which allowed candidates to demonstrate their competence in specialised vocabulary. Again, however, the second, unprepared conversation often adjusted the balance when marks were awarded globally.

Finally, both centres and candidates must be congratulated on their efforts to produce such a good standard of material. This could not have been easy at the best of times, but what is remarkable is that in spite of the debilitating and demoralising effects of the pandemic, teacher-examiners have been able to prepare candidates for these examinations with excellent results.